

# INTERIM

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## Editor's Note

*I have always wondered about the term "non-commercial" in connection with the policies of the little magazine. I have decided that it is only a self-abnegating way of saying you want to sell your magazine, and yet you don't want to admit it. It is the kind of sterile pride which drives the editors of literary quarterlies into owning bookshops, running all night restaurants, or ending up in New York to find that peace which the world cannot give.*

*The very term "little magazine" implies apology, clique-love, and the worst kind of sotted misanthropy. It is as if the editor is forced to say, "I am the rebel. I carry the torch. Like Kafka (whom too often he has not read) I am the persecuted one."*

*Actually, this is hogwash. Little magazine editors are often as venomous in their competition as lightweights, graduate students, and gay actors at a late party. In revolting against a literature of catholicity, they revolt against that very positive spark which made them want to start publication in the first place.*

*I say with all sincerity that a new honesty is needed if the serious magazine printing serious literary material is to continue. We should tell the public, not that we are non-commercial but that we are better than most of the so-called commercial gup, which the dividend Draculas make the public eat up each year. We must be a hell of a lot more aware than we have been in the past. A lot of this awareness lies in refusing to enjoy the grooves into which we slip. Too much regionalism (the better authors in Macmillan's recent NORTHWEST HARVEST are correct in saying there really is no such thing in literature) brings in the stay-up-late moguls who are said to be potential and always will be. Too much non-objective consideration of the work of one's friends fills up a lot of costly galleys and eventually makes enemies. Too much public self abasement tends to show how faltering an editorial policy was in the first place. Too much nostalgia (PARTISAN REVIEW) can make a public used to a magazine. Too much topheaviness (THE HUDSON REVIEW) can make a public tired of one.*

*I feel that INTERIM can speak frankly in this way. We have been guilty of all the faults; and yet still retain the virtues of some of the best literary periodicals in America. We have given writers their first chance before the public because of the writing itself, and not because it was a thing "little magazines" are supposed to do. We have always believed in full evaluations of books rather than simply reviews, which regard books as ducks to be hit or missed, depending on both the gun and the man who hands it to you. We are anxious to present worthy material by established writers, but again it is the material and not the mastication of some minor bon-bon from the generous Big Time. We are anxious to feature work from the Pacific Northwest, but we are often willing to say that we can't find worthy work here, just as we cannot find the sun during much of the winter.*

*Probably our greatest challenge to date is our relationship to the academic world. INTERIM is no more academic than a lot of academic writing is scholarship. However, it cannot be denied that some literary quarterlies rely in some measure, on both the submission of literary material and the financial support of the academic institution. (INTERIM has been eager to further the former state and unsuccessful in introducing the latter). This is as it should be, as a uni-*

*(continued on page 40)*



## Inquisition

*Six or seven men sit behind the high table, the man in the center armed with a gavel. Below them, facing a witness, sits the chief inquisitor. Behind him sit two or three rows of members of a university faculty. Beyond them sit ninety-one spectators, all that can crowd into the small chamber.*

*A preceding witness, a self-acknowledged ex-communist with a highly dubious record, has testified that the witness now on the stand has participated in inner-circle communist activities. The latter, who has previously made available to the inquisitors a group of affidavits from colleagues of unquestioned integrity to the effect that he cannot from their intimate personal knowledge conceivably be a communist, has under oath just denied being or ever having been a communist.*

*The inquisition shifts gear.*

*Question: "Do you advocate any changes in the American way of life?"*

*Answer: "I do. One such change I should welcome here and now: an increased respect for the American Bill of Rights."*

It would be reassuring if one could report that the above incident gave this investigation of the subversive activities of a university faculty quietus with a bare bodkin.

But red-hunters are not to be put off more than momentarily by a mere appeal to the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights, they seem to believe, was instituted to protect men in their freedom to run with the majorities; to join the right organizations, vote the right tickets, think the right thoughts. Though the idea that the founders of the nation should have thought it necessary to provide legal protection for these "rights" is a little surprising, they seem to be the only rights that un-American activities committees can view with tolerance. These committees do, of course, ostensibly set out in search of Communists; but they so consistently smell Communism wherever there is a scent of heterodoxy that every right except the right to be orthodox is threatened.

The entire current confusion and dissidence on the subject of civil liberties in America seems to this writer to be the consequence of a perfectly obvious dilemma: the unwillingness on the one hand of the American people, in the light of the American tradition, to outlaw a political party, in this instance, of course, the Communist Party; and the desire on the other hand of a considerable proportion of those same people to ostracize the members of that party. The simple result of this situation is that throughout the land American citizens engaged in entirely legal however objectionable activities are being made the objects of an attack which whenever it succeeds broadens a breach through which may ultimately pour the full host of the enemies of freedom.

The justification most generally offered for this attack is that its recipients themselves are enemies of freedom who must be challenged in their freedom to oppose freedom if freedom itself is to survive. The most evident retort is

that freedom will scarcely confirm itself as freedom by repudiating itself.

It is hardly deniable—at least this writer will not attempt to deny it—that Communists consistently make it difficult for the proponents of freedom to include them in its defense. They pay their most eloquent tribute to a government which, whatever may be its accomplishments and virtues, is ruthless in its denial of many personal privileges which to Americans are the very symbols of their status as free men. To most Americans a vote is not a vote unless it is a choice, a leader is not a leader unless we follow him without command, an idea is not worth expressing nor a book worth writing or a cheer worth giving unless at our option it could have been altered or withheld. Our Communists exploit the liberties we grant them; they laugh up their sleeves, we are told, at every cooperation they get from the liberals whose liberalism they despise; they discriminate between public morality and personal morality and abandon the latter unhesitatingly whenever it conflicts with what they consider to be the former. They appeal to civil rights and they plot uncivil violence. Indeed, their sins are legion.

For the sake of the argument, let us grant all this—grant all the counts in the foregoing indictment. But unless the counts be extended to include legally established action or the advocacy of action leading to the disturbance of the peace or the overthrow of the state, liberty is more threatened by the suppression of Communism than by Communism itself.

If one does not like Communism or Communists one is reluctant to embrace them in complimentary analogies, but one is frequently driven to do so by the exigencies of the hour: to point out that Socrates was forced to drink the hemlock because he “misled the youth” and “made the worse appear the better cause”; that Jesus, too, suffered death because he displeased the scribes and pharisees; that Joan of Arc was burnt at the stake for the “witchcraft” of unorthodoxy; that Galileo recanted on his knees his knowledge that the earth moved around the sun.

Today, Communists relish such analogies and those of us who don't like Communism are foolish to make the analogies available—not by recalling them in our words but by invoking them in our actions.

Whenever a Communist or anyone else is thwarted in his civil liberties he is strengthened in the cause for which he suffers suppression, just as all those who participate in effecting the suppression are weakened in the cause in the supposed interest of which they inflict it. An idea fighting for its right to be heard is in a dynamic posture. An idea refusing to be challenged is sick, or dying, or dead. Still vital ideas protect themselves and require no institutional sanctions. Sick ideas huddle under the protective wings of institutions. A democracy that is jealous, jittery, intolerant is a sick democracy. It undermines itself. But no totalitarianism can touch a democracy which so believes in itself that it will surrender none of its fundamentals, such as freedom. Whenever totalitarianism does threaten democracy it is not because of totalitarianism but because of the weakening of democratic faith. And a weakening of democratic faith can only be the consequence of a vitiation of democratic processes. We can, therefore, protect democracy best by purging it within rather than by putting it behind the Maginot line.

The argument has been advanced that in the sphere of public education the majority of the constituency that supports an educational institution can



properly require that the teachers they pay shall promulgate the views which they approve, and that in this employer-employee relationship no abrogation of civil liberties is involved by the stipulation of such terms in the contract. But though this argument may have adequate legal status, its educational implications are disastrous. Its effect is to intimidate thought and promote dishonesty in an area in which adventure and integrity are fundamental. Every advance that has been made in the field of education—as in other fields—has been initiated by a minority. True, many minority initiations have been specious, or mischievous, or worse: but unless the good is separated from the bad in the area of free contention the good and bad remain hopelessly confused and no education at all is forthcoming.

The strongest point democracy has to make against totalitarianism is that the latter minimizes personal freedom. In seeking to defend itself by strategic retreat into a progressively contracting compass of freedom democracy gives up without a fight its proudest part.

*The men sit behind the high table. The gavel bangs.*

*"I should like," a witness has just said, "to make a statement of my principles.*

*"We want no more quotations from Shakespeare," the chairman has retorted.*

*The witness in earlier testimony has quoted a line or two from Polonius to Laertes: "To thine own self be true . . ."*

*An expert for the Committee had opened the hearings by testifying for many successive hours, quoting without interruption from sources less impressive than Shakespeare.*

*In these sessions mercy droppeth not like a gentle rain from heaven.*

*And history has a thousand times demonstrated that "fact-finding" is not attained by Inquisition.*



## *Two Poems by*

### **Itinerary**

*There was an old house in Harper's Ferry  
With tiles that exploded into pigeons  
At our approach; with empty wings laced  
With daylight and dogs that hated us  
With howling; and great furniture  
Ornate with the pigeons and guano.  
An old man at the turning  
Read John Brown from his primer mind  
Word for word; and showed us the arsenal site  
And the high steps to Jefferson's perch  
Where sightseers had initialed the rocks  
With their feet and penknives.  
The church on the up path  
Coveted the mist and bat greyness  
Of a cave where dead villagers  
Existed on wall plaques, and Mary  
Pressed back against stalactites  
Rain painted on the stone above the altar.  
And under a new bridge crossing triumphantly  
Orange to pine coloured Virginia  
A pine coloured river flowed. And a wide  
Tunnel mouth spewed middle twentieth century  
Over John Brown, the arsenal, the ferry,  
The Union, and the insurrection.*

## MARVIN SOLOMON

### The Living and the Dead

*The Virginians came out of the rain  
Out of the Potomac in blue jeans and profanity  
Onto the wharf laughing at the sudden sanctity  
Of roof. The women wore summer things  
And braids and brassieres foolproof  
Against rain, and flaunted the anachronism  
Of store cigarettes and pepsi-colas.  
The men tied themselves a close knot  
Of conversation running around the bad teeth,  
The sun colour, and the sweat slipnoose  
Fashion. And we talked of the fish in the boat,  
Of the children handy at bowlines  
And being river nautical, and of the women  
Handy at children (That one's my wife . . .  
She's been drinkin' some . . . That one she's the mother  
of the two boys). The kids see-sawed  
The gangplank, and a black dog—  
Rastus and twelve years shaggy—flicked off  
The humming flies and talk. And downriver  
Rain came up and land went down,  
Virginia disappearing in dark loops.  
And up the hill dead Washington  
Lay in the company of Martha and cypresses  
And several hundred visitors who milled  
Around the sundial casting their own shadows  
And times of day . . . And as we passed  
The smokehouse in let-up rain we heard  
The clatter of the Virginians setting out on the river  
Again come faintly up the hill.*

W. S. GRAHAM—

*Selection from "The Lost Other"*

*All hills stand me on Dechmont's empire  
Higher than some mountain past where  
Pressed back on a royal rocky chairback  
I've so gone glad, my joy to take.*

*Hope holds me high. All my days tell.  
All palmed my Mays have rambled full.  
I'll shout that ferrysong over wa'er.  
The Calder hold her. This hill call her.*

*Question makes measure of the true answer.  
Never so dare I'll doubt the murmur.  
The turnstone turning Tara up  
Hears in the stones the exiles weep.*

*Nor I'll (by Blantyre and Bothwell Go)  
Doubt my house cages America.  
Beyond my window the land maintains  
My flying memory and best of queens.*

*Instead like us all fast locked here  
I end myself continually where  
The dead look out as I move by  
Between new rudiments involving liberty.*

*By her hand set to rule and witness,  
Beacon to burn with you in the branches'  
Graceful carriage of dancing, how she  
Is almost nothing more than I*



*Made into, let it be bullrushing waters  
Wearing her flax and floating daughters  
Over the rumours and passed enough  
Of kin to her to be stone and grief.*

*This morning the Calder's earliest bells  
Below me call her. Lanarkshire's wheels  
Unwind men underground and me under  
The flowering bings of my own shire*

*Where continually my first industries  
Echo and call and know her rays,  
Having from her first forerunning whisper  
Kept on quietly burning there.*

*Forerunning summer and the parks  
Come green away. Mad winter works  
Sore withered of its beggaring, wailing  
Bewildering wretches' ear-ringing song.*

*There's home and time again called out  
Over the torentops and those delicate  
Gangways, ways between Hamilton's pastoral  
Shellcups and relics of a child's bell.*

*Quick by my fortunes every day  
Through fire and night-speaking pillow  
I'm set to rule what I make pleasant  
In this place. She so without stint*

*Suffers the first walk of the east  
While Dechmont turns round all the host  
That move differently under this sky  
Expecting liberally prophecy.*

*One time she's to stop by my journey  
So gentle with a lost answer to my cry,  
To mean with gowan by Calder river,  
To minstel all the morning fair.*

*I'm to hear tell from her own miles  
Fairly her wordway child. All bells  
Ring passtime above me this far morning.  
She, mother, rocks and sea, she's song.*

*Am I to start, as sound a bacchus  
In travellers' myrtle, citizens of lochs  
Day by deep day under Ben Cruachan.  
So strike me now, her companies again,*

*Strike deadly through my piling justices,  
Roof of my grave, sky of my histories.  
Strike day by diving on the sea,  
The brine of sailing to The One Liberty.*

*I am all name to be seized to her  
So high as cairn and the top bonfire  
Alight on Dechmont, servant of the kingdom  
Of Heaven this day and choosing my name.*

*Then lean out, Love, and yearn from the window  
That ever you saw from, that far hero,  
Someone wandered into imagination  
And weed of the way, and word won.*

*And grief, hunter of sound, what world  
Comes drowning me down loud to unbuild  
Before surely my industry finds her  
Under the principal sky's care.*

## 'THOMAS GALLAGHER

### Just to Rest

Stepping off the noiseless self-service elevator at the third floor, Jeff walked left and then right, through the arch and then down the carpeted hallway past the air purifier which gave off a faint odor of carbolic. He knew exactly when to turn and when to walk in a straight line and kept his eyes closed so that they'd be used to the darkness of the apartment before he got to it. He thought she might be asleep and opened the closed door as quietly as possible, and found the living room as cool and still as a tomb, the windows shut so tightly that he could no longer hear the clatter of the stick-ball game in the side street below which had meant almost as much to him as a reprieve as he watched it before entering the building. The thick rug deadened even the sound of his moving about, and all he could see of the setting sun was what needled its way through cracks in the dark green window shade, drawn as usual to the very edge of the sill. He stood blinking, peering at the glittering worms of light which seemed to move as he moved and which reminded him everyday now of a slide of streptococcus germs that he'd seen once under a microscope. He laid his jacket across a chair and stepped to the doorway of her room, turning the knob slowly, sticking his head in just far enough to see the bed. The quiet putrefaction of her peeling skin sent puffs of fungi up his nose, clashing with the fresh air that was emanating from his clothes like fumes of ammonia. But he couldn't hear her breathing at all. Anyone else would have said it was a corpse.

"Is that you?" she called in that new, far-away voice of hers that reached him like a strand of hair.

"Yes," Jeff said, shouting so she could hear him, "may I come in?"

"It that something new?"

He opened the door the rest of the way and stepped in. "I mean, did I awake you?"

"I wanted you to. Can you see?"

"Hardly," Jeff said. "How are you?"

"Put on the lamp. And sit next to me. The same, Doctor Hoffman had a tube in me three hours."

Jeff tilted the lamp shade so there wouldn't be any glare and turned the switch, and went and sat on the bed next to her. She could easily have been fifty. Where her eyebrows should have been there were two bleached strips that stood out against the yellow of her skin like shriveled cort plaster. The skin itself looked like tissue paper that had been too close to a fire. Jeff could almost look through it, and whenever he tried, she seemed to lose even what was left of her personality.

"Have a busy day?" she began.

It always started with him. And ended with her.

"Not very," he said, since there was nothing she wanted to know. But on the chance that she might be interested, he added, "It's all at the printer's except one editorial."



"Speak louder," she said, "I can't hear you."

"I said what was the tube for?"

"My kidneys."

"What did he say about your ears?"

"That my nerves may be affected. May lose my hearing completely."

"What else?"

"Just to rest."

Jeff was quiet.

"He wants to go back to taking my temperature the other way," she added after a short silence.

"What for?"

"He said it has to be accurate." She looked at him. "Is it so awful?"

"Did I say it was?"

"I didn't think you minded."

"I don't," Jeff said. "What I mind is I thought you were past that stage."

"It was a hundred today when he took it."

"You like Doctor Hoffman, don't you?"

"He's very kind, yes."

"Not much of a pusher, though, is he? Never gets impatient or annoyed at the way things drag, does he?"

"He's doing his best."

"I was talking to a specialist today," Jeff said.

"You promised me you wouldn't."

"This one happens to be doing an article for us. I just mentioned it and he claims it isn't lupus erythematosus at all."

"How does he know? He hasn't seen me."

"I mentioned the butterfly mark on your face. He said only erysipelas gives you that."

"I don't want any other doctor looking at me."

"Erysipelas would mean that the shades could go up," Jeff said. "The sun is supposed to be good for it." He glanced at her thin raked hair, and at the white powdery scalp beneath which looked like something you could poke your finger through. "Your scalp needs the sun, Joan."

"Why does light hurt me, if it's good for me? Even the lamp there?"

"You only think light hurts you. It helps you. It helps everybody."

"I have faith in Doctor Hoffman."

"Then why not see what other doctors think of his diagnosis?"

"It's what I think. And I think he's doing fine."

"He's not curing you, if that's what you mean."

She reached out her hand to where it nearly touched his. "He said that whatever it is I've got, it's past the contagious stage."

"Don't start that again, Joan. Please."

"Why?" She slipped her hand over his knee.

"Get well, that's all," Jeff said. "Get well."

"And in the meantime?"

"Don't worry about me."

"But I do. I don't want there to be anyone else."

"There isn't."

"I don't want there to be. And if you keep refusing there will be. So let me."

"Is all this for *me*?" asked Jeff. "Or because then you won't have to get well?"

"Why won't I have to then?"

"You'll have everything you want, won't you?"

"How you've changed," she said. "It used to be where you'd beg me."

"That was for something different. I'll beg you again once you're well."

He raised his head wearily; they had gone through it all before. But as his eyes rested on a photograph of how she used to look, the old hope revived and he realized that in spite of what it meant to him to come home to her day after day after being with people who were still in the thick of things, he still wanted her to get well, and believed she would.

"Joan," he began, "remember after the war when we were first married, how you said everything had been worth the struggle."

"You said then that it was the end of the struggle."

"Everybody said it then."

"And what is everybody saying now?"

"That's all the more reason," Jeff said.

"To go on struggling?"

"Yes. What else is there?"

"I've stopped asking myself that question."

"Darling," Jeff said, shouting so that there couldn't be any doubt of her hearing him, "when people like us are gone, what will happen?"

"What's going to happen anyway?"

"But until it does, what else is there? Don't give up, Joan!"

She had closed her eyes.

"Can you hear me?" shouted Jeff. "Joan!"

"Jeff, I want you to relax when you come home. Forget your editorials. Relax."

"No," Jeff said, "I won't. So stop it. Do you hear? Stop it!"

"I thought that you could sleep in here tonight for a change. Now that there's no longer any danger of your catching anything."

"Isn't there?"

"I told you what Doctor Hoffman said."

"Joan, you're talking to *me* now."

"I know. And are you listening? Will you ever listen?"

"Not to that, no."

"Jeff, please."

"No! Have as much respect for me as I have for you."

"It's not a matter of respect. I just want you on my side."

"And I want you on mine."

"Will you sleep in here?"

"Will you let me bring in another doctor?"

They looked at one another, and it was as if only a thin hair were holding them together. He was holding firmly on to his end and she was holding firmly on to hers. Neither would let go and neither would give ground.

"Well," Jeff said, "I've got work to do." He stood up. "Did Mrs. O'Brien fix your supper?"

"Yes."

"All right. If you need me, just call."

He went to the living room and shot up the shade. It was going on seven

o'clock but there was still enough light to write by. He shoved his desk a little closer to the window and tried to get started.

"Dear Friend (he wrote) you have just recently gone to the polls to vote in what may have been the last election in history."

It was a letter that they were planning to send to prospective subscribers, and though his strategy was to shock the reader into recognizing the gravity of the times, to do so without sounding hackneyed he had to plumb feelings which with Joan in the next room he would rather have suppressed—to admit to himself, that is, his own desperation as well as the desperation of the world. So that the more impressive he tried to make the letter, the more aware he became of her insidious attractiveness, her proximity, and of her gloom which was one of the very symptoms of his desperation. Before long he fell to wondering what *her* reaction would be to the letter and was horrified at how easily his center of gravity seemed to shift from where everything mattered to where nothing did. Then the liquor-store sign across the street went on, throwing his desk alternately into light and darkness. He tried to write regardless, but it turned out to be too distracting, so he got up and pulled down the shade and, feeling his way back to his chair, sat resting his eyes in the dark. The room seemed absolutely black, but as his irises grew larger he could tell, even with the shade drawn, when the sign went on and when it went off. It finally became possible, during the illumined interval, to distinguish between objects in the room, and then, with a feeling of disaster, he saw the glittering worms of light in the window shade. They seemed to come to life and then to die, to come to life and then to die, and to come to life again. There were millions of them, and every time the sign went off and on again, there seemed to be millions more. He fell asleep watching them and even had a dream about them in which they all had Joan's head and Joan's eyes. Later, it was Joan's voice that woke him.

"Yes?" Jeff said.

"It's very late."

"It is? I fell asleep."

"I know you did," Joan said. "Because you're overdoing it."

"What do you want?"

"Are we friends?"

"Of course."

"Then why not sleep in here?"

"Must you keep after me? I've got to finish this."

"If *you* don't finish it, someone else will. Let what's-his-name finish it. Come on, you must be tired."

"Why can't you let *me* decide?"

"All right, I will. But hurry."

Jeff looked up, staring through the darkness in the direction of her room. He remained that way, staring, and then became aware of the fact that he had a pencil in his hand. It began to slip from his fingers before he wanted it to, but once it started there was nothing he could do about it. His fingers weren't paralyzed, they were tired. Very tired. The pencil had become too heavy, and now, as it landed on the desk and rolled away, he got up and stepped into her room.

"There," she said, after he had slipped in next to her, "is it so awful?"

"Joan, I just want to sleep."

"That's all I want you to do. Here, let me tuck you in."



They lay without speaking, on their backs, she on her side of the bed and he on his. Jeff could smell the mildly foul odor of her skin and then gradually a feeling came over him that had nothing whatever to do with what happened everyday—a calm, unprotesting and absolute, until he was aware only of the utter darkness of the room and of the complete absence of any noise. It was a static, all-pervasive feeling that did away with words, with the concentration necessary to use them, and with the need of that third party of the mind which tries to reconcile the differences, the misinterpretations, and the ill-timings between people. There were no shocks, no sudden enigmatic changes either in the room or in his thinking. Joan, for instance, was gone, yet he need not speculate on what she was doing.

He folded his hands over his chest and stared up at the ceiling ; and slowly, without coaxing or compulsion, her placid body called him to her, until, without knowing who or where he was, he fell asleep.



At Calvary, At Calvary

I

*The Texan stood upon the hill  
Where the king's soldiers played craps and  
milled about, generally.  
He'd parked his mare (smooth chestnut  
mare with big ears and three white  
Stockings) down by a little synagogue,  
Down by a little synagogue,  
And looked at the hanging teacher,  
The horseless hanging teacher.  
With big-hand abandon hit his git-fiddle.  
Hay, Jesus, Jesus, up on the cross,  
Where in hell did you leave your hoss?  
Sell it to a niggerman, you old Jew boss?  
He sang,  
Jesus, Jesus, where's your hoss?*

II

*The Texan chuckled, well ho (HO!)  
Well, ain't that the funniest  
Thing you ever heard?  
Get it? Old Jew boss, no hoss?  
Now, seeing the dying man (hearing  
too the gore-heavy words slipping  
from the corners of his mouth),  
Watching him pull slightly  
From nail to nail,  
The Texan, in pure improvisation,  
(Made it up myself, man!)  
Sang,  
Hay, Jesus, Jesus, upside down,  
Where in hell did you sell your gown?  
To an old lame kike, you crazy Jew clown?  
He sang,  
Jesus, Jesus, where's your gown?*

III

*"For the Lord Jesus  
Died nekkid  
As the day  
He was bornded."*

## CLARENCE ALVA POWELL

### Tides

*The tempest drove him into such despair  
That even hatred could not succor love,  
Nor the adúlteress, passion, find a sacred  
Lair, nor leaven tranquilize unrest.  
The tissue underwent a subtle form  
Articulately mesh, the burning issue  
Caught in storm of mind dissolving flesh.*

*The bassoon tore his frame and skeleton,  
A shadow, fell into the wave and wore  
Sea-shroud, each eyeless eye a singing shell  
Of sunken meadow in the cruel moon.  
And wishes, like the silent undertones,  
Usurped his quiet moods as questing fishes,  
In his bones, disturbed his solitudes.*

### Caravan

*The land, pure ambiency of color lies  
Beyond the vision, deeper far than graves  
Beneath the waves of somnolent precision  
In the heart, or in the questing eyes—  
The Appalachian dream, the desert arch  
Of sun or prairie march beside the stream  
Continuous in the westward caravan.*

*Ploughshare and toil upon the barren face  
Of Ozark fastness to the Great Divide,  
Or in the tide of battle through the vastness  
Of the mountains, settled every place—  
The salmon rivers, deep bayous, and plains  
Of death: the growing pains of mortal sweep  
Beyond the wild imaginings of man.*



Husband, I Leave You

*Today the godetia in me  
The hardy flowering female plant in me  
Turned black in me  
And made God's acre of me  
Through age,  
It was the last day  
Child could have been seeded in me;*

*Husband, semi columnar  
Flat on one side  
You said wait  
The enslavement of parenthood can wait  
You said time never ceases  
You said, self luminously, remain my Queen  
My unchored Diety;*

*Time is dead  
Sponsor the baptism of death to me  
Death to the small feet  
Never knowing one step with me,  
Death to you  
Hanging from your own lance  
Speared by self love;*

*Hear my pistils crying to me  
See my glands drying  
And saying to me  
Mother;  
Tomorrow's echoes  
In the caves of me.*

## KENNETH PATCHEN

To Bunneni, Hake, and Clem Maugre, the Seers  
of Gloccus—as well as to all other forgotten  
minstrels of our enlightenment.

*Put the rest away, O put the rest away,  
Naked girls are waiting in the tumbled hay—  
And dead leaves fall to the ground.  
How many lives do you expect to squander?  
The soul is winged like a bird? well, I wonder—  
The great kings lie without sound*

*And a dark music moves over the greenest wood.*

*For once they pressed warm lips on another's mouth  
And in this darkness sang of the morning star*

*But now they kiss as they are bidden,  
And praise with tunes which sound  
Like the sighing of a wind.*

*Cold riders by a colder ridden,  
Slack reins in hands as grim  
As the crying of a man.*

## *Two Poems by*

### **The Sea Farer**

*The sea will wash in  
and the rocks—whether seen  
by air, jagged ribs  
riding the cloth of foam  
or a knob or pinnacles  
lined with gannets—  
whose screams we may guess,  
are the stubborn man.  
He invites the storm, he  
lives by it! instinct  
with fears that are not fears  
but prickles of ecstasy,  
a secret liquor, a fire  
that inflames his blood to  
coldness so that the rocks  
seem rather to leap  
at the sea than the sea  
to envelope them. They strain  
forward to grasp ships  
or even the sky itself that  
bends down to be torn  
upon them. To which he says,  
It is I! I who am the rocks!  
Without me nothing laughs.*



## WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

### The Sound of Waves

*A quatrain? Is that  
the end I envision?  
Rather the pace  
which travel chooses.*

*Female? Rather the end  
of giving and receiving  
—of love: love surmounted  
is the incentive.*

*Hardly. The incentive  
is nothing surmounted,  
the challenge lying  
. . . elsewhere.*

*No end but among words  
looking to the past,  
plaintive and unschooled,  
wanting a discipline*

*But wanting  
more than discipline  
a rock to blow upon  
as a mist blows*

*or rain is driven  
against some  
headland jutting into  
a sea—with small boats*

*perhaps riding under it  
while the men fish  
there, words blowing in  
taking the shape of stone*

*Past that, past the image:  
a voice!  
out of the mist  
above the waves and*

*the sound of waves, a  
voice . . . speaking!*

## PETER VIERECK—Twenty Years After

"But Sacco's name will live in the hearts of the people when . . . your laws, institutions, and your false gods are but a dim remembering of a cursed past in which man was wolf to the man . . . Our words, our lives, our pains—nothing! The taking of our lives—lives of a good shoemaker and a poor fishpeddler—all!"—Vanzetti's last speech to the court, 1927.

*"Twenty Years After"—fine old Dumas title—  
Twenty years after, nothing's changed a tittle:  
The fishpeddler has joined the Fisherman;  
God, squinting down, finds man still wolf to man;  
The TRIBUNE still beguiles the muddle-west,  
And Greeks still starve for half the loaves we waste;  
And now as then, Red-baiter vies with Red  
At changing Easy Street to Dead-End Road.*

*Waddling through hell with Pilate, sleek Judge Thayer  
Still finds the Nicest People slumming there.  
But he, a slowpoke just like any gent,  
Learns pep from newcomers more diligent  
Who sport Efficiency outspeeding ours:  
Twelve hundred Saccos "judged" in twelve brisk hours  
The day the gas was on at Ravensbrueck.  
"Trains ran on time." And so did death-carts. Their  
Neat martyred skulls, stacked high like brick on brick,*

*Tower into a trans-Atlantic beacon  
To warn (whenever glib old voices beckon:  
"Why die for Danzig am I my brother's keeper?")  
That freedom flees—not all our cash can keep her—  
When conscience snores in fat forgetfulness.  
O must we drain for each new generation  
From shoemaker—or carpenter—its ration  
Of blood enough to drown man's bloodiness  
And splash our conscience back to wakefulness?*

## The Meaning Doesn't Matter

Since the Renaissance, science has provided men with a highly developed material civilization, but in return has removed from them the props of security which sustained previous civilizations. Invading field after field of human speculation, it has also attempted with increasing success during the last century to overrun the provinces of arts and letters. As a result, growing numbers of artists, philosophers and teachers have fought a retreating battle, seeking a high place of refuge beyond reach of the scientific attack. It is not surprising that many of them should turn to the pre-scientific cultures, particularly the Middle Ages, for aid; and that in the subtleties of medieval philosophy they should find intellectual justification for their stand. The University of Chicago has become their stronghold, and they have been remarkably successful in extending their influence over other universities and even in gaining popular recognition through the Great Books program. Now that the past war has provided evidence that we have at last the means to destroy our civilization, and the events of the post-war years have provided no evidence that we possess the wisdom and moral strength to prevent the destruction, they have been emboldened to sally forth and attack the weakened enemy. This is a good time, therefore, to reappraise their position and estimate the success of their offensive.

One of the most recent and audacious of these attacks is Richard M. Weaver's *Ideas Have Consequences*.<sup>\*</sup> With breath-taking brashness, Mr. Weaver makes a sweeping indictment of western civilization, analyzes the causes of its ills, and obligingly offers a cure—all within less than 200 pages. Because he writes so confidently and uncompromisingly, he has provoked a great deal of excited discussion. He has made himself, temporarily at least, the philosophic spokesman for the intellectual reaction, and his book therefore demands a careful consideration which, judged purely on its merits, it would not warrant.

Beginning with the familiar assumption that western civilization has been declining since the late Middle Ages and that its destruction is imminent, Mr. Weaver strikes swiftly at what he believes to be the ultimate cause of this decline—the victory of the doctrine of nominalism over logical realism in the late fourteenth century. Since he has the happy ability of seeing all things from the point of view of transcendentals, he is able to alchemize the accumulated painful decisions of men into the easy decision of *man*, with no factors influencing the decision except *man's* perverse desire to exercise freedom of will. Thus he can say that at a given historical moment, western man made a deliberate and evil decision: he abandoned his belief in the existence of transcendentals and set himself up as the measure of all things. Upon this decision,

<sup>\*</sup>Richard M. Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences*, University of Chicago Press, 1948.



all evils followed logically and inexorably. With the loss of reverence for transcendentalism began the study and conquest of nature and the development of modern science. Rationalistic and materialistic philosophies flourished, and "man created in the divine image . . . was replaced by man the wealth-seeking and consuming animal."

It is from this point of view that Mr. Weaver attacks contemporary culture. He writes with the cold fanaticism of a puritan minister. Many of the things he denounces are the old familiar targets for criticism: the vulgarity and sentimentalism encouraged and in part superimposed by the newspapers, radio and movies; the setting up of wealth and physical comfort as the sole end or purpose of life; the constant pressure toward uniformity in attitudes and behavior; the atomization of knowledge and obsession with facts which make impossible any unified philosophy; and the growth of a spoiled child psychology which destroys the sense of social responsibility. But he attacks these evils primarily as symptoms of a greater evil: "equalitarian democracy." Some of his most ponderous criticism is directed against the concept of equality and the humanitarian and liberal ideals. He views with alarm mass literacy, mass education, especially in state universities, and the increasing independence and power of labor. Indeed I can't remember a single characteristic of our civilization to which he points with pride. Duty to his transcendentalists requires that he condemn it sternly though sorrowfully, *in toto*. Throughout the book there runs like a keen lament over the artistic and moral disintegration of a fallen civilization.

What then are the means by which civilization may be saved? In his introduction, Mr. Weaver states that he attempts something not commonly found in books such as his. "I go so far as to propound, if not a whole solution, at least the beginning of one." The solution will be found to be disappointing, I'm afraid, even for those readers who have accepted the thesis of the book unquestioningly. First, says Mr. Weaver, we must hold fast to the last metaphysical right left to man, private property, by which he means small properties: homes, farms, and local businesses. The possession of such real property induces independence and a sense of personal responsibility and guarantees physical security and moral certitude. Good. But since he disapproves of democracy, by what other kind of government can private property be protected? How will the distribution of property be determined? These questions Mr. Weaver evades, and his "last metaphysical right" remains merely a high sounding and empty phrase.

Mr. Weaver's next proposal is to restore to language the power and absolute meaning which modern empiricism has attempted to remove from it. Semantics must be discredited; the word must be seen not as a substitute for the thing but as the embodiment of transcendental truth. Upon education rests the responsibility for rehabilitating language through the study and analysis of poetry, the study of Latin and Greek and the study of Socratic dialectic. By these means, universal communication can be reestablished and order and law restored to our thought and action.

Mr. Weaver's final proposal is the restoration of piety in our attitudes toward nature, our fellowmen, and the past. Piety toward nature seems to mean no more tampering particularly by science with the physical world and the natural order; however, when he discusses impiety Mr. Weaver is led into

a violent and wonderfully self-revealing tirade against "the foolish and destructive nation of the 'equality of the sexes'." He ends his tirade with a statement that sounds like a note dictated by the old Wordsworth to Miss Fenwick: "Woman will regain her superiority when again she finds privacy in the home and becomes as it were, a priestess radiating the power of proper sentiment. Her life at its best is a ceremony." You may not believe your eyes when you first read that statement. I didn't. But there it is.

What Mr. Weaver means by piety toward our neighbors may be illustrated by another quotation: "The virtue of the splendid tradition of chivalry was that it took formal cognizance of the right to existence not only of inferiors but also of enemies." One of the pernicious results of equalitarianism is the loss of respect for differences among men. A return to piety means recognition of hierarchy and distinction, the existence of a great chain of being. Finally by piety toward the past he means respect for and a living by history and tradition. And, at the very end of the book he emphasizes what is of course implied in all else that he says, the need for religion.

These are Mr. Weaver's "beginnings of a solution," and it is obvious that they are no solutions at all but simply pretentious abstractions, meaningless until placed within the context of a society which lives by them. The truth is that Mr. Weaver doesn't play fair with his reader or else he lacks the courage of his convictions. He neither describes the kind of society which will save civilization nor indicates how it may be attained. The possible reasons for his reticence may emerge if we construct as best we can his dream society on the basis of his very specific criticism of our present society. First of all, it would draw from such models as medieval chivalry, eighteenth century England, and the pre-Civil War south. It would be governed by hero-leaders, chosen from among the propertied aristocracy and the gentlemen scholars. The latter would also serve as the philosopher priests of the state religion. The economy would be dominantly agrarian. Industry and science would be sternly controlled. In fact, scientific discoveries and inventions would be, in most instances, suppressed and the use of the inductive method forbidden. There would be a strict supervision of education and major means of communication like movies, radio, the newspapers; if possible, the latter three would be eliminated entirely. The right to education would be limited because Mr. Weaver believes that the increase in literacy has been a mixed blessing which has added greatly to the sum of our woes. Higher education would be in the hands of private universities; present day state universities Mr. Weaver all but calls houses of prostitution. Labor organizations would be suppressed and strikes forbidden; the incentives of comfort and profit would be replaced by the conception of work as a duty, an honor, and an end in itself. It becomes increasingly clear that at the bottom of Mr. Weaver's criticism lies the religious conviction of original sin: "Man is in the world to suffer his passion"; "Life means discipline and sacrifice." Consequently he views with horror the impious idea "that the goal of life is happiness through comfort" and one gathers that in his ideal society the majority of men will be aware that they were born to suffer. It will be, to say the least, a Spartan society.

Now perhaps one reason why Mr. Weaver limited his solution to abstractions is that he knows such a society as he would propose is possible only with the destruction of modern civilization. Actually he welcomes such destruction

with the fanatic righteousness of a Jeremiah or Savonarola: "Perhaps we shall have to learn the truth along some *via dolorosa*." "It may be that we are awaiting a great change, that the sins of the fathers are going to be visited upon the generations until the reality of evil is again brought home and there comes some passionate reaction like that which flowered in the chivalry and spirituality of the Middle Ages."

Another reason why Mr. Weaver limits his solution is, I suspect, that he prefers to ignore the immediate implications of his criticism. He must know that his book will be widely interpreted as an argument for capitalistic or fascist dictatorship in spite of his not too clearly stated objections to both. His objection to German fascism, for example, seems to be not so much to the principle as to the particular leaders and methods. At any rate, to put fascism aside, I'm sure that Mr. Weaver will find the finance capitalists among those giving strongest support to his case. They will simply string along good humoredly with his metaphysical objections to materialism and use with delight in their own way to their own ends his philosophic justifications for the perpetuation of hierarchy, the discipline of labor, the guidance and possible curtailment of education and the control of press, radio, etc. Whether he likes it or not, Mr. Weaver plays into the hands of the economic reaction, and if he wishes to take practical action, must work through them. It is a pleasant irony to think that in his indictment of modern civilization Mr. Weaver may succeed only in contributing to the support of those mainly responsible for and dedicated to the perpetuation of the primary evil of that civilization—materialism.

I say that it would be an irony because I do not believe that Mr. Weaver really wants to throw in his lot with the reactionaries, although he might vote for them as the only way of obtaining even a little of what he desires, short of the destruction of civilization, or simply because they represent authority, hierarchy, tradition, and metaphysical order which though perverted and evil is better than none. To Mr. Weaver the rule of Satan would doubtless be preferred to chaos or "equalitarian democracy." But the fact is that nothing in his book indicates that he has given any thought to a practical program of action for the correction of the evils he attacks. What Mr. Weaver really wants is an unattainable golden age of the past. He is, under the mask of classicism, a romantic. Turning in fear and hatred from a civilization of confusion and conflict, he looks longingly back across the centuries to an age of unchanging order and simple faith. He dreams of a society in which instead of endless struggle to discover what to believe and how to act there was unquestioning acceptance of transcendental purposes and guidance; a society in which he, the gentleman-scholar, the philosopher-priest, would have been important and secure rather than as now, ignored and frustrated; in which he would have been revered as today the scientist is revered. It is perhaps significant that he calls the philosophy of transcendentalists the "metaphysical dream." And that he should believe that his dream society actually existed in the Middle Ages shows either a childlike naivete or a wilful disregard for the history of the period. Perhaps the extreme example of his romanticism is his contrast of the modern with the historical soldier, whom Mr. Weaver sees as a hero dedicated to ideals above property or life, and thus the "last protector of reason." In contrast, the modern soldier, having no feeling for heroism and the ethical significance of soldiering, looks upon fighting as a "job" to be done quickly.



Mr. Weaver has no objections to war provided it is regarded as a crusade or a chivalric defense of ideals fought according to a code, but he recoils in fastidious horror from the modern conception of war as a brutal business. "The refusal to see distinction between babe and adult, between the sexes, between combatant and non-combatant—distinctions which lay at the very core of chivalry—the determination to wield all into a formless unit of mass and weight—this is the destruction of society through brutality." I should like to place beside this a quotation from Froissart, the chronicler of chivalric war. Detailing the advance of the English through Picardy, he says laconically, "Another troop under the command of Sir John of Hainault . . . came to Origny St. Benoit, a tolerably good town, but weakly inclosed; so that it was soon taken by assault, robbed and pillaged; an abbey of nuns violated, and the whole town burnt."<sup>1</sup> In retaliation, King Philip of France permitted his knights to invade Hainault. They "came to the town of Haspres, which was a large, handsome town, though not fortified; nor had the inhabitants any fear, for they had never received the smallest notice of war being declared against the country. The French, on entering the town, found everyone within doors. Having taken and pillaged what they pleased, they burnt the town so completely that nothing but the walls remained." A priory of black monks was "also pillaged and burned most villainously."<sup>2</sup> It is hard to avoid believing that Mr. Weaver's concept of chivalry is drawn from *Idylls of the King* or *The Boys' Story of King Arthur*; certainly it was not drawn from history.

Of no one does Mr. Weaver speak more harshly than of the nineteenth century romantics; perhaps unconsciously he wishes to deny his indebtedness to them. At any rate his anti-scientific and anti-materialistic arguments are little different in essence from theirs. His reverence for tradition is Burkean; his concept of the hero, his anti-democratic bias toward labor, Carlylean; his admiration for the country man, the constant contrasts he draws between the countryman's virtues and the city-dweller's decadence, and his piety toward nature, Wordsworthian. But whereas these ideas vitalized the art of the nineteenth century, in Mr. Weaver's book they become dry bones encased in academic classicism. One road of the romantic protest has led to a dead end in an ivory tower.

There is then nothing particularly new or profound about Mr. Weaver's indictment of modern civilization. He has made no contribution to the solution of our problems. Indeed, his book is one of the least creditable presentations of this point of view because of its arbitrary assumptions, its wild generalizations, its irresponsible manipulations and interpretations of history, its arrogant disregard or dismissal of evidence which does not fit its thesis, and the ministerial pomposity and tired rhetoric of its style. Nevertheless, it would be unwise to underestimate the importance of the book. The fact that it has received extravagant and unqualified praise from many prominent academic critics is an indication that its thesis is an attractive and influential one in American universities. Perhaps the peculiar appeal of Mr. Weaver's book lies in the very characteristics enumerated above. The complete absence of doubt, on the contrary, the aggressive confidence with which he asserts that here is the Truth—this is in itself contagious and persuasive to those who de-

<sup>1</sup>*Chronicles*, trans. Thomas Johnes, New York, 1880, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 38.



spising the values of their own culture and restive under "uncertainties, mysteries, doubts" are reaching after certainty at any price. To such people, the price for following Mr. Weaver seems small and the reward great. Actually the price for society is large, for the acceptance of Mr. Weaver's thesis means the withdrawal from active participation in attempting to solve the problems of society in terms of the facts of society. It means the refusal to try to educate men to use the materials and inventions of society more intelligently. It means rejecting the social ideals of democracy, partly because one of the ideals is equality and another the happiness of as many people as possible through comfort. It means, in effect, doing nothing to help existing society because it is beyond help and isn't worth helping anyhow. It means cultivating one's garden of transcendentials in the fond belief that if civilization is blown to hell the garden will be far enough away not to be damaged by radioactivity.

Since the majority of those who applaud Mr. Weaver's thesis are associated with universities, and in particular with the liberal arts, the acceptance of his ideas means drawing more sharply than at present the line of demarcation between the liberal arts and the sciences. It means an attempt to isolate the arts and turn them in upon themselves for sustenance. It means indifference to teaching and students, except for an ever smaller group of the elect. It means, therefore, that the majority of students would be driven to the sciences for the satisfaction of their moral and aesthetic as well as material needs and that the arts, having won a Pyrrhic victory, could enjoy it in elegant isolation.

Such are possible consequences of Mr. Weaver's ideas. It is not likely that many even of those who accept the ideas are prepared to accept the consequences. The danger is that the consequences, particularly in education, may be brought about simply through unthinking acquiescence in or fashionable cultivation of the ideas. For they have undoubted snob appeal and may become widely attractive as evidence of intellectual superiority. In the Gilbert and Sullivan opera, *Patience*, Bunthorne succinctly stated the reasons for such an appeal:

*If you're anxious for to shine in the high aesthetic line  
as a man of culture rare,  
You must get up all the germs of the transcendental  
terms and plant them everywhere . . .  
The meaning doesn't matter if it's only idle chatter of a  
transcendental kind.*

If the time comes when the meaning doesn't matter, then the consequences of Mr. Weaver's ideas will be all that he desires.

The Stones and the Bread

*If ever I found myself stepping those different  
stones, I found myself revisiting the same  
bank I had so often revisited and sworn  
never to see again. It was a game*

*in which I held one foot up and was forbidden  
to step in initialed squares;  
and one in which, with a fading eye upon heaven,  
I listened to the music and circled the chairs.*

*in an indirection as direct as death.  
I stood alone or sat in someone's lap,  
and became the donkey after which they came  
either to trace me through the trap*

*or pin me with the pins. And I was taken  
and animal-tumbled into a black-barred bed  
to gouge at dreams of the miraculous knife  
that grows in the sinister bread.*



Cornerstone

*The following closely sequential episodes from Markham Harris' recently completed novel, CORNERSTONE, either directly or indirectly present a majority of its principal characters. These include the narrator, Paul Saxton, managing editor of a children's encyclopedia; his sister, Carol; her lover, Rico Costello, and Eugene Matthias, a gifted musician, who has lately been cast in the emergency roles of hearing aid and book salesman. Father Silver is an unmarried Episcopal clergyman of high church enthusiasms.*

*Set in New York and New England, time, the present, CORNERSTONE is centrally concerned with the ironic poignance of life's battle when fought by the more than commonly vulnerable with no armor save a thin skin, no weapons other than awareness.*

It was after six o'clock when I reached my place. The elevator boy's message was routine, but his manner lacked something of its usual weary cognizance of all that he surveyed.

"There's somebody waiting for you in the reception room," he said confidentially.

Father Silver, dead black from head to heel, except for a segment of snow white collar under his chin, rose from a chair to greet me.

"I am dining in the neighborhood this evening and so cannot burden you for long," he said. "Your sister told me where you were located, and I promised to look in on you were the opportunity to present itself. I should be very pleased if you would have a glass of something with me before dinner. Are you free?"

We found a quiet place nearby and sat down together.

"Please have whatever suits you," he insisted, "and don't resent my pallid choice. It is a matter not of morals but of preference, believe me."

I overmatched his glass of sherry with my Scotch and water.

"It's very nice to see you," I said. "How are you, and how is my shamefully neglected family?"

"I am as always, and your mother—I saw her less than a week ago at the church—was her usual good works self."

He hesitated and an undecipherable expression, as of feelings that cancel each other out, crossed his face.

"And how's that sister of mine?"

He looked at me and then down at his wine, which clung to its own equilibrium as he slowly tilted the glass this way and that.

"How do you find her?" he asked solemnly. "I have no wish to concern myself where I am not welcome nor to pretend to confidences I neither have nor seek, but I will say that I have been a bit concerned for her lately."

"Perhaps you have been seeing something of Carol. I hope so."

He seemed relieved.

"I have," he said, "and the more I see of her the more I wish her well." He spoke too carefully, his imperfect candor as evident as a flaw in a mirror, and it might have been all to the good had we been able, for once, to trade places, making him the burdened penitent and I the empowered confessor.

"You sound rather ominous," I said. "Were Carol a kid of sixteen, reared as neither pagan, Christian, nor woman, one might fuss and stew just because, but she is in fact supplied with a profusion of stars to go by and a pair of sharp eyes the better to view them. Poor lass, she goes regularly to church and has even a mother to guide her. If you have concern to spare, I'm sure I stand in greater need of it, alone and doubting here in Sodom."

Father Silver did not let down and my defensive shafts fell blunted from the granite of his dignity.

"I am not in the least concerned for you," he replied, "discourteous as that may seem. The happy can live unscathed in Sodom by day and Gomorrah by night, but the miserable would not be safe in Paradise itself. It may have been a mistake, my looking you up like this without the shadow of an invitation, and if I seem impertinent, I hope you will put it down to the officiousness inseparable from my calling. On the other hand, I am convinced that yours is not the routine armed truce of brother and sister, and I am counting on what I flatter myself is my perception of your perception."

We saluted each other with faint, deprecating smiles.

"You will understand me," he continued, "when I say that your sister seems unhappy, seems under some kind of severe strain, which the strongest among us cannot bear indefinitely. I do not know the cause and my usefulness consists in not knowing it. But I venture to suggest that whatever it may be, a mother's warnings from the past are likely to be of as little use as a priest's reminders of the hereafter. The struggling soul is alone and scarcely hears the anxious voices calling from the shore."

He must have become distrustful of his waxing rhetoric because he stopped before it was to be expected and dispatched the last of his sherry with unclerical haste. Had it been raw alcohol in several times the quantity, it could not have mounted to his head or worked its way into fingers and toes more treacherously than his love for Carol, betrayed by hints of song in his disinterested, high-minded words. The situation really called for a swift poke in the sacerdotal ribs and a long, lewd wink, yet I allowed myself to be as deceived as he was.

"Though Carol is not exactly twenty-one," I said, "she is theoretically free and presumed to be white, and she has been known to listen to me on those occasions when she finds my brand of paradox acceptable. Levity aside, I greatly appreciate your visit and won't forget what has been said. I also appreciate this excellent Scotch."

Seemingly appeased, Father Silver worked a fat timepiece out of his smallest, most inaccessible trousers' pocket and saw with dismay that he was late for his dinner engagement. He remembered just in time to leave too small a tip, more or less sprinted into the street ahead of me, and was off.

\* \* \*

The following day, a bluish office Monday, I had a call from Matthias. In his customary full-bodied tones I was commanded to come over to his studio after five for a drink that was to precede dinner at some little French place he



did not hesitate to guarantee. "You are not permitted to turn me down, Comrade D-vor-ak," he asserted firmly. So I didn't, although I rather wanted to.

I found his bell above a soiled card on which the letters of his last name had been boldly crowded. At my ring, there was the sound of a window being opened somewhere on the front of the house, and the maestro's big voice rang out in the dark, quiet street.

"Oh, Comrade, Comrade?"

His head and shoulders were thrust far over a second story sill, and his tie hung down like the dangling end of a rescue rope.

"Comrade, when you hear an infernal rat-tat-tat at the door, enter. I shall be working the electric lock for you. Do you comprehend?"

"I was a celebrated locksmith in my youth," I replied. "It should suffice."

Matthias drew me across the threshold of his domain with a strong, welcoming grip. "My forge," he said dramatically.

A piano, which cut the base off the windows with its long, level back, stood at the far end of the room. There was a studio couch against one wall and a big table opposite. Some sort of plumbing equipment, probably a washbasin, was screened off in a near corner, while in a far angle of the wall a large, beetle-browed head of Beethoven glowered upon the scene. Books in unexpected quantities stood and lay about.

I was ceremoniously relieved of my topcoat and hat and ushered to a chair. An Old Fashioned in a glass the size of a flower pot was presented to me, Matthias raising a twin of equal capacity.

"Here's to you," he said, "and to your late handsome efforts in my behalf."

I absent-mindedly drank to myself, downing the somewhat raw liquor with alacrity. My memory fled back to Lois Snell at Elwood's, her mouth so very straight and her words like flicks of a lash.

"There's always the modesty of toasting oneself," I said, "more particularly after a complete failure. Puts me in mind of that order of nuns, or whatever they are, who wring your hand and grin from ear to ear at the news of a death in the family."

Matthias lifted his nose to breathe and smacked his lips.

"Both customs, though admittedly rare, are well conceived," he responded in weighty tones. "A man who can drink to his own failures and bereavements passes beyond reflex to reason. Besides, you did not fail in the recent incident, you merely did not succeed, and I submit there is an important difference. Tell me, has no good thing come of your efforts?"

"Well, Mr. Elwood did suggest that you have a talk with Editor-in-Cheek Johns. He thought a place might be found for you on the staff of the Cyclo-pedia." I fear I sounded doubtful.

The maestro sounded more doubtful than I. "No, my boy, forgive me, but I lack the systematic ignorance demanded by such a post—yourself excepted, of course."

"How about some free-lance stuff for us on music? I don't doubt we could use it to advantage."

His expression remained intransigent. "Even my sword would be mightier than my pen, Comrade, thank you though I do, and that most sincerely. Then there likewise is the consideration that he who can make music well, yet resorts to writing about it ill, joins the ranks of art's many and busy little masturba-

tors. But consider once again: was my loss no one's gain, however remotely? Reflect."

My head hung lower than ever. "I got a raise," I said.

"Ah, good! Good! As for me, it seems I shall be getting a wife."

He dived into his glass again, taking a long pull, and I did likewise—not that silence was the ideal sequel to what had last been said. Matthias would not let me get away with it.

"This prospective marriage of mine—it meets with your approval?"

"Congratulations."

"Now, now, lad, you are being indirect, a vice to which I hear you are somewhat addicted. Allow me to remove all temptation from your path. Do you, or do you not, if not as a friend then as a disinterested spectator, unreservedly approve my forthcoming marriage to Lois Snell?"

"I could not unreservedly approve of any marriage under the sun, including my own—if ever," I answered. "Yet I admire Lois and like her, except on those occasions when I have been unlucky enough to run afoul of her will."

"She is also very ambitious," Matthias observed quietly.

"And not for herself alone," I added more quietly still.

Came a second pause, longer than the first but not as provocative. I examined the keys of the piano close at hand, noting the precise, even beautiful pattern of their white and black segmentation, but any attempt to ponder their mastery was smothered by equal parts of distaste and want of precedent. All I had of pianistic background was bounded by a nutshell. Nevertheless, I volunteered a question.

"When it comes down to really playing the piano, what's the word, Gene? Like anyone else, I've heard it attempt communication under my sister's earnest knuckles, and, to be sure, I have once or twice been present when you gave it the ultimate what-for. But such flights, you understand, are clean out of my ken."

"Have you ever tried to play it yourself?"

"Not beyond fumbling by ear for a few chords."

Matthias went over to his piano and drew back a functional-looking chair. He waved me over. "Be seated," he said.

"But I don't know one note from another, and look how many there are!"

"Among the eighty-eight before us, can you not find middle C?"

"Maybe I could if it were by itself," I ventured. "Is it really in the middle?"

I scanned the keyboard unhappily, seated low and helpless in the maestro's saddle. I pointed to a note at random.

"Do I win the cigar, teacher?"

"No, but you get to suck on the stub for coming close. Two up and you have it."

I pushed the key down so gingerly that it failed to sound.

"Come," Matthias said, "be firm. Strike it!"

I struck it.

"All right. Now strike seven more successive keys upward and stay on the whites."

I poked my way along with one finger until my ear suggested the place to stop.

"Have I played anything?" I asked.

"You have played the C major scale, and if you could be said to have completely mastered it, you would be a pianist."

"Just that simple scale?"

"Just that simple scale. You cannot, however, expect to master it with one finger. Try the proper fingering. Put your thumb on middle C."

"Not my thumb!"

"Your thumb. There was no hope for real progress in the playing of keyed instruments until the thumb came into its own about Bach's time. Start with your thumb—correct. Now follow with your first finger and then your second. Stop!"

"What's the matter?"

"After the second finger comes not the third finger but the thumb again."

"I can't see why."

"No, but when you not only understand why but also how, you will be on your way."

I stumbled over the rest of the notes as directed, winding up feebly on my little finger.

"Try again," Matthias directed, "and get the thumb under and ready for its next note just as soon as it releases the first. Concentrate on the thumb, the fingers will take care of themselves. The pianist does not have a thumb and four fingers, he has five fingers. When he no longer has a thumb, he has a technique."

I played the scale again, somewhat less awkwardly, and was asked to repeat.

"Good," Matthias said. "Again."

I played it again.

"Not so good," he said. "Again."

I obeyed.

"Slightly better. Again."

I protested.

"Comrade," I said, "all work and no play lets my drink get warm. May we have a recess?"

"I beg your pardon," he exclaimed solemnly, "I was forgetting that you are a guest, not a pupil. But let me say this much. For one who hopes to get anywhere with the piano, it is a case of all work and no play. To play is not to practice and to practice is not to play. You comprehend?"

"Definitely, and I gather something else as well. The piano is the most difficult of instruments."

"If the demands of its enormous literature are added to its technical demands, I think perhaps it is."

He sat down in my vacated place and adjusted the chair as carefully as if he had a thousand listeners instead of only one.

"The C major scale," he said.

He played exactly what I had played and as slowly, but even to my ear there was a sad difference. His tones were confident and satisfying, and one gave way to another without break or blur. There was also a kind of life in them, just as if they knew for themselves that they were going somewhere. The one short sequence was repeated several times, suggesting that the player was not content with what seemed to me identically successful versions. Soon he was traveling over most of the keyboard, up and down, faster and faster. When

I thought the limit reached, he suddenly fingered it right-handed with blinding speed from the glittering treble to the roaring bass, then the left hand shot up from below as a rocket mounts into the sky before it bursts. After that both hands were in it, and they boiled away in opposite directions before heading back toward one another as might a pair of express trains on the same track. Matthias ended his demonstration on cat toes, giving out those original eight notes upward from middle C.

"Why don't you take a few lessons with me, Comrade?" he asked. "You'd make an interesting convert, and there would, of course, be no charge."

"You should take piano sometime yourself," I said. "It wouldn't surprise me in the least if you turned out to have a knack for it."

Still on the fence though I might be where the maestro and all his works were concerned, the comparison between what I had done and he had done on the self-same testing machine had not merely forced open my eyes, it had like to torn the lids off, leaving me unshielded from the noonday sun. In spite of myself, I felt as if I had been hammered down to the size and shape of an animal cracker.

"The truth is I do think of studying again," he replied very seriously, "with the grand old fox of them all—Bruno Froelich. But there's the little matter of finance. I'd have to borrow the means to eat, and sleep, and work like forty dedicated devils. And if I did borrow, it could not be from my future father-in-law, insistent and generous howsoever he be. For that, my dear Comrade D-vor-ak, would not be marriage. It would be prostitution."

He left me standing by the piano and resuming his easy chair, tossed off the remnant of ice-water in the bottom of my cocktail glass. In my chance line of sight, his head and shoulders fell directly beneath the protecting, plaster glare of "Louis" Beethoven.

\* \* \*

Carol had promised to telephone me the first thing Wednesday morning. When she failed to do so, I waited until lunch time and then called her. It was not a pleasant surprise to have her announce firmly that Rico was sailing Saturday as planned because, after they had talked it all over again, she had urged him to go ahead. His ship sailed at midnight, and she was coming down to see him off, and the whole business sounded so crisp and distant that I began to feel snubbed. We hung up while things were still entirely on the surface.

For an hour or so I nursed a cold spot in the midriff, but as the afternoon wore on memory played and re-played the record of her few, high-pitched words, and as I listened my resentment of them, and also my faith in them, ebbed quickly away. Just short of four o'clock, I announced my departure, giving no explanation, and went over to the Grand Central where I boarded a 4:20 train to Titusville. It was actually under way before I realized, as in a serial thriller, that I did not have Rico's address.

Like those balmy ones who traverse New York's streets unnoticed, glaring and declaiming into the void, I called myself names and made faces, meanwhile resigned to a return trip from the first stop. But as my brains revolved in time with the wheels of the car, I bethought me of the resourceful everywhere, until I was possessed of the spirit of Tom Swift and therefore sat in clean-limbed repose, hatching strategems under my part. In case cunning failed me, there was, after all, the sweet sister.



Titusville had a classified directory, wherein I searched for the names of building contractors. Three outfits were listed, and though two of them were Irish, the third, bearing the not improbably Latin name of Tito Paglieri and Sons, sounded decidedly like the prosperous combination Mother had mentioned that summer evening in the rear yard. I asked my way to their location and entered a bare, soiled office suggesting the interior of a concrete mixer. Something male and unshaven, his hat stuck to his head, eyed me over a paper and between the earth-kissed soles of a pair of stoutly shod feet that were on the desk.

"I was wondering if a young man by the name of Enrico Costello works for you people," I said genially.

"Tony, front!" the sitter shouted and went back to his reading.

A young, hard-eyed Italian appeared from within and exchanged glances with the unique receptionist before giving his attention to me.

"You want to see somebody?" he inquired, looking me over.

"Yes," I said, "Enrico Costello. I think he works here."

"No more, he's gone away."

"But he hasn't gone yet, has he? His boat doesn't sail until Saturday night."

The eyes behind the paper were likewise on me now.

"He quit last Friday."

Both of them continued to regard me as steadily and unhelpfully as possible.

"I'm a friend," I said, "not a cop or a process server. You can tell that by my feet. I was passing through town and had the idea of looking Costello up before he sails for the old country, that's all. You could phone him and tell him I'm here. My name is Saxton."

The sitter said something in Italian and yanked open a drawer of the desk. He handed Tony a number of sheets clipped together and resumed his pursuit of current events.

"This says 68 Church Street," Tony said. "I think he's gone already."

It was after five, a cold and nearly constant wind blew in the streets, and there was the hearty encouragement of Tito Paglieri and Sons. Had there not also been a bus to Church Street, I should have the better minded my own business and gone home. What I saw of the street did not include a church, but it included a row of rooming houses, one much like another and all bearing small evidences about their doors and windows of those better days. Number 68 had an elegant brass bell pull, almost too bright to finger and, it appeared, more an ornament than a utility. However, after a long wait, during which I could not tell whether I was announcing my presence or not, the big front door was slowly pulled open by a gum-chewing little girl.

"Hello there," I said, "does Mr. Costello live here, Mr. Enrico Costello?"

"Sure," she said, "he's here, second floor front. Go on up."

In the red and yellow dimness of the upper hall, I knocked on a heavy, panell'd door, which was promptly and vigorously opened, thereby catching me like a dazzled owl in the glare of three powerful, unshaded bulbs that blazed from a ceiling fixture. A short, stocky girl with blue-black hair and big, gleaming teeth smiled at me.

"I beg your pardon," I said, "I'm looking for Mr. Costello. Which door is his?"

She glanced over her shoulder.

"Somebody to see you, Rico," she said.

He appeared from behind the door, a pile of shirts in his arms, and at the sight of me he tossed them into a chair.

"Mr. Saxton, Mr. Paul Saxton!" he cried. "Enter, please. I am honored. Also have a seat, and accept my pardon for the very big mess. I make ready for a journey."

"I know," I said.

The girl slipped out, closing the door silently behind her.

"The young lady lives upstairs," he explained, pointing upward and grinning broadly. "She thinks one man cannot pack a trunk. Woman's work, she says. I do not tell her I do it many times myself already. One is not so unpolite, eh?"

Again he grinned, his teeth as big and white and maybe as sharp as the girl's.

"I heard about your trip," I said, "and thought I'd look you up. When do you expect to get back?"

Costello shrugged his shoulders.

"Sometime after the New Year, yes or no."

I thought of the return ticket he had bought for Carol's sake.

"I don't blame you," I remarked, "for not trying to get a return passage in advance, things being so uncertain at home."

"That is it," he replied, "very, very uncertain."

The arena lighting allowed the room no secrets, not even the finger marks near the handle of the closet door nor the large, round spot on the wall above the studio couch where someone had rested a greasy head. A giant suitcase was well filled with Costello's things, yet at least as much more duffel lay about in chairs, on the couch, and on the floor. A plaster Madonna stood benignly amid the welter on the bureau, which included a snapshot of Carol and a number of school books.

"How have your lessons gone?" I asked. "Is Carol a good teacher?"

"Good, yes, and very, very patient with my slow brains."

"She is patient, sometimes too much so. The only one I know to match her is Father Silver. They'd make a good pair."

Costello's eyes changed and the grin, never wholly absent since my arrival, faded out.

"I have not seen the man for a long time," he said. "I thought he had gone away."

"No indeed, he's now the curate at the Thedford church, Carol's church."

"So?"

"And I'll have to admit that he's a good organizer. Carol, for instance, hadn't been in sight of the church for years until Father Silver came along. Now she's joined the choir, goes to meetings at the parish house during the week, and along with my mother has given the parson the run of the house. Seems to me he's always under foot."

"Under foot, eh? That is a good piece of English."

"What with Christmas coming on, there'll be so much doing I guess we'll just have to find him a bed at our place."

Costello had turned several shades darker the while I babbled transparently,

and there was so much business inside his skull that his face looked deserted.

"Strictly between us," I said, "and only because I know my sister trusts you completely, I am mentioning the fact that Father Silver has become more interested in her than he yet realizes. Once he does realize the full state of his feelings, anything might happen; particularly as I'm afraid she finds him attractive. With Carol, everything is liable to go where her heart goes."

Costello, his face black and nothing else, came over to where I stood against the edge of the table. His right hand was already a fist.

"You are a American brother, Mr. Saxton," he said. "That is a plenty good thing because if you was a Italian brother and say such a thing, I beat you up. In Italy we mind our business all the time."

"When it comes to minding business, Costello," I said, "what is done in Italy does not interest me too much, and I wish it interested you less. As a strictly American brother, I am telling you that your business is to remain in America, the Beautiful, and, if she will have you, marry my sister. Don't you think even an Italian brother would have the same slant on the matter under the circumstances that exist between you two?"

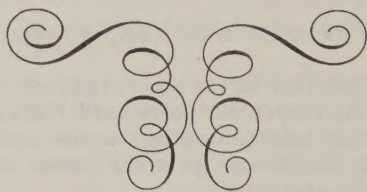
"Maria!" he exclaimed in a muffled voice, and I saw his hand come up. It was more a shove than a punch and was slow enough to be avoided.

"Come, come," I said. "Granted it would be no end of fun for you to flatten me, I'm not one of your road gang. You could probably take me all right, but you wouldn't win anything that way. In my sister's league and mine, the rules are different. You have to be right to get the decision. Think it over, and remember that you aren't the only one who knows damn well that once in Italy, always in Italy for you, my boy, sick father, citizenship, Carol Saxton, papers and all."

"Wait," he called after me, "wait, Mr. Paul Saxton! I have not finish with you!"

"But I've finished with you," I answered, opening the door and body checking the girl from upstairs who could not get her listener's face wiped off in time.

As I hurried away, I glanced up at the stars that glittered down from the wide and wintry sky. The taste of bird cage in my mouth grew stronger while I pounded along.





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Alman, David  
*The Well of Compassion*  
Simon and Schuster, 1948

Bentley, Eric (Ed.)  
*The Importance of Scrutiny\**  
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*Strait of Anian\**  
Ryerson Press, 1947

Brookhauser, Frank  
*Request for Sherwood Anderson*  
Alan Swallow, 1947

Cherwinski, Joseph  
*A Body In the Sea*  
Private Printing, 1948

Gonzalez, N. V. M.  
*Seven Hills Away*  
Alan Swallow, 1947

Graecon, Robert (Ed.)  
*Irish Harvest*  
New Frontiers Press (Dublin), 1946

Grene, Marjorie  
*Dreadful Freedom; a Critique of Existentialism.*  
University of Chicago Press, 1948

Hamilton, Horace E.  
*Through the Moongate*  
Dorrance, 1947

Hanson, Pauline  
*The Forever Young*  
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Heilman, Robert B.  
*The Great Stage\**  
Louisiana State University Press,  
1948

Hyman, Stanley Edgar  
*The Armed Vision\**  
Alfred A. Knopf, 1948

Jeffers, Robinson  
*The Double Axe\**  
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Lawrence, Robert  
*The Ninth Hour*  
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May, James Boyer  
*For a New Era of Hate*  
Alan Swallow, 1947

O'Connor, William Van (Ed.)  
*Forms of Modern Fiction\**  
University of Minnesota Press, 1948

Queneau, Raymond  
*The Skin of Dreams*  
New Directions, 1948

Swallow, Alan  
*War Poems of Alan Swallow*  
Fine Editions Press, 1948

Williams, William Carlos  
*A Dream of Love*  
New Directions, 1948

Wolfe, Don M. (Ed.)  
*American Vanguard*  
Cornell University Press, 1948

Viereck, Peter\*  
*Terror and Decorum*  
Scribners, 1948

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\*To be discussed in forthcoming issue



### *Editorial—continued*

versity or a college is made most manifold by being party to what is creative and challenging in the academic community. The coming of the professional literary artist in to the schools is healthy. The making of a few professional literary artists by the schools is increasing. A fair balance between the scholar, the critic, and the artist on the pages of a university catalogue is a good sign that something alive is going on. All three parties may rebel at this situation, but they must sooner or later resign themselves to the fact that they're pretty well stuck with it.

The readers of the "little magazines" (including our erstwhile champion, Miss Martha Foley) are getting tired of us, and rightfully so. At this moment, in various parts of the country the combination of precancelled one cent stamps and mimeograph machines are announcing new "Organs of Expression." Each organ is being named. I suggest as possible springboards toward baptism: LILITH, POGROM, AMBERVALIA, GLISTENING FETTERS (formerly THE LEFT FETLOCK), NUDGE, DUNG, or perhaps FILAMENT. Whatever the name, it will all only be a lick and a promise, unless little magazine editors stop gathering driftwood and present their magazines as a continuum of good writing and honest perspective. Too many editors today imagine they carry a cross, when in truth it is only a chip.

A. W. S.